

The Woman

Purpose:

1. To become aware that members of one culture have a view of the world that is not shared by members of other cultures
2. To understand that members are locked into their point of view and often find it difficult (without concentrated effort), to change their perceptions to see as members of other groups do.

Procedure:

1. Project the picture of the woman and tell the students to prepare to describe what they see.
2. After a few seconds, cover the picture then ask individuals what they saw.
 - a. Some will see an old lady and some will see the young lady. If some have seen the picture before, ask them to not give it away yet.
3. Ask who saw one or the other or both.
4. Tell those who saw the old lady to turn and face the back of the room
5. Uncover the picture and ask those who saw the young lady to try and see the old woman
6. See how many finally discover her and note how long it takes.
7. Do the same thing with those who saw the old woman.
8. Ask students from each group to come forward and outline their image for those who cannot see it.
9. Make the connection between this experiment and cultural perception by having students answer the following questions. (this can be done in small groups)



Follow up Questions:

1. Give a brief description of the following expressions.
 - a. “We see what is behind our eyes.”
 - b. “We see what we know.”
 - c. “Seeing is believing.”
2. Describe what picture you see in your mind when you hear the words;
 - a. House
 - b. Bread
 - c. Breakfast
3. What do the following people see;
 - a. French
 - b. Japanese
 - c. Mexican
4. Explain this statement: “Without a culture we cannot see, but with a culture we are forever blind”
5. What does our culture allow us to see?
6. What does our culture keep us from seeing? Why?

To help my students become aware of our own biases and different perceptions of the same thing, I projected a transparency of “The Woman” and told them to prepare to describe what they saw. After they had looked for a few seconds, I covered the transparency and asked what they saw. Some saw an old woman while others saw a young woman. Those who saw the old woman were asked to face the back of the room while I uncovered the transparency and asked those who saw the young woman to try and see the old woman. I let them try and figure it out on their own. Some did without help, but others needed some guidance. Some still couldn’t find it. I did the same thing with the other group and finally I asked people from each group to come up and outline it for those who still could not see. One student could not find the young woman no matter how long we tried to show her. Other students said they saw, but they didn’t convince me that they really did. The pressure from the other students made them finally relent and say they did so they wouldn’t feel silly.

To make a connection between this experiment and cultural perceptions and biases that we may have I had the students consider the following questions in small groups of three; 1) what picture do you see in your mind when you hear the words, “house”, “bread”, “breakfast”? 2) What does a French person or a Japanese person see? 3) Explain this statement “without a culture we cannot see, but with a culture we are forever blind” 4) what does our culture allow us to see? 5) What does our culture keep us from seeing? Why?

We discussed the fact that once you see something your way and are locked into that view, it is hard to see it from another perspective. But with guidance and explanations from the other person’s perspective, one begins to see what the other is seeing.